

The Rainbow Times

Your LGBT News in Western MA, the Capital District of NY, Northcentral CT, & Southern VT

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Opinions

Not so fierce of an advocate

By: Nicole C. Lashomb/Editor-in-Chief

I will be a "fierce advocate" for the LGBT community, President Obama once proclaimed. Of course, that was before he was elected into office and before Washington politics became his game too.

Obama's flip-flop on Don't Ask Don't Tell, DADT, and the Department of Justice's support of DOMA in the infamous report, which equated LGBT people to those who practice incest, do not sound like this President is a "fierce advocate," nor even a somewhat strong advocate for the LGBT community. However, recently at the DNC's LGBT fundraiser, and after many green democrats pulled out of the fundraising efforts, Biden reiterated the "support" that the Obama administration has for the LGBT community. He said, "I don't blame you for your impatience. I hope you don't doubt the president's commitment." I spoke to friends and family alike and when I presented them with this topic, almost everyone agreed that they, themselves, are questioning this President's commitment.

Interestingly enough, when major financial backers pulled out of the DNC's LGBT fundraiser, President Obama almost hurriedly signed into law a bogus bill that would extend LGBT federal workers some limited benefits, just days after he supported the DOJ's claim

and degradation of our community. That sounds like a typical politically-charged strategy to me!

According to sources at Politico.com, the Vice President spoke to the donors inside the fundraiser for over 20 minutes about the commitment that the Obama administration has toward fulfilling the campaign promises made to the LGBT community. To this news I say, I'll believe it when I see it.

On the flip side of this argument, I have heard people say, "Give him some time, he has other pressing issues to deal with right now." I don't know about you, but to me, my life, my family's life and the rights that I am denied and have always been denied as a tax-paying lesbian are a priority. Of course that I understand that the first thing on his agenda was not going to be same-sex marriage, but to have allowed the DOJ's report to speak in such a manner about our lives. Come on!

I do not expect Obama to fix all of the problems of the world at once. I expect the leader that our community helped to elect and who emphatically proclaimed to help us as well, to at least have the decency to defend the LGBT community against perpetrators who equate our lives to incest and to advance our cause instead of setting us back. Is that too much to ask from this "fierce advocate"?

The Controversial Couch

Lie back and listen. Then get up and do something

By: Suzan Ambrose/TRT Columnist



Holy horizons! A new cloud formation has been discovered ... or has it? Scientists are still trying to figure out if the unusual formations are indeed, new. These "upside-down stormy seas" clouds are so intense and rough-looking, they've named them after the Latin word for 'rough'. Maybe eventually it'll be 'raining men' and give those Weather Girls that orgasm they've been singing about for years.

Or, perhaps this is another indication of global storming, or environmental fallout from China's attempt to control the weather via firing rockets into the sky. One never knows what invisible things can alter our world, causing a chain reaction. (Just think the plague, genetically modified food ... you get the picture.)

How many of us dreamed of having super-powers when we were kids, like being able to be invisible? Wow! How much fun would that be? Imagine the things one could be privy to if they were present but not seen. (I'll just keep my mind out of the trash.)

LGBT people are often invisible to our straight counterparts. Or choose to be. How many times have we heard: "I could spot a gay a mile away" from someone who has no clue who they're speaking to or about? And we keep silent out of fear, or not wanting to

engage a bigot.

Unless one wants to be visible, there are far too many of us in the LGBT community that prefer to blend in with our surroundings. Real *homonization*, so to speak.

This is very noticeable with many of our Trans brothers and sisters, partly because of the danger of being out and visible; partly because they want to blend in, choosing to remain unseen.

Our very invisibility allows us to be a part of society and not really have to deal with discrimination unless we are "out". And by that, I mean noticeably so. But this same gift, as some would deem it, is a two-edged sword, because we often must tell others who we are on the inside, and that secret can be deadly, locked away inside of us.

Invisibility has its privileges, but not many. After all, if we can't be seen and have no identifying tattoos to distinguish us, how can we know who we are? (besides the gay haircut, of course.) Or how many of us are out there if we can't be counted?

At the time of this writing, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) is holding a huge fundraiser in Washington DC with the LGBT community. Our new president and Congress see us as a fairly invisible group when we

See Couch on Page 3

C'mon Out – Just Ask! Advice column

By: Tetty Gorfine*

Dear Tetty:

I am a middle-aged lesbian. I've had several relationships with women and they have all had their gifts and their hardships. I love being in relationship and long for a stable marriage. I am now single again and have been so for a while now. I really want to find someone. At the same time there is a part of me holding back. I am afraid of never finding my life partner, I'm afraid of being left and I am afraid of being alone. But if I don't look I don't think I'll find someone. Can you give me any advice? Thank you so much. Louise

Dear Louise:

I applaud that your ability to recognize and identify the many different feelings you are having concerning this important issue and moment in your life. Often, we humans grasp only one part of a complex web of conflicting feelings and try to run with that. You are not doing this. This is no small feat.

You find yourself both wanting a relationship and holding back. Your wanting a relationship is clear. Holding back seems at least in part to be comprised of some fears. This is where I suggest you stop, look and listen. Ask yourself what it would mean not to find your life partner, what it means to you to be left and be alone. You have the opportunity to develop a deeper relationship with yourself if you can explore being alone. Yes you have fears about this and perhaps if you can stay with those you may heal some old wounds, befriending yourself more deeply or find other positive aspects to being alone. This does not mean you will never find your life partner, just that you are giving yourself some time to get to know yourself on a deeper level.

You also have fears about being left. What comes



TETTY GORFINE

up for you in your fears of being left? What beliefs about yourself attach to this fear? If you can stay with this you may find opportunities to heal old feelings and beliefs you've been carrying your whole life. If you can identify and explore each thought, belief and feeling, with it holds a

potential of healing.

What else is in the holding back? Holding back and fears are all parts of you seeking to be known. Each has a story behind the feeling. Our hesitations are important moments. They are clues as to some part of us that need to be voiced and understood. If we ignore our hesitations, ambivalences and fears they will end up sabotaging our efforts. They do so because when we do not keep conscious the things that influence us, we end up acting from them without even realizing it. When we hold down thoughts and feelings (repress) they still have a great impact on our lives. They make us do things that leave ourselves and others confused. Becoming conscious and aware offers the only chance at real choice.

Every feeling is trying to tell us something. With open heart, compassion for oneself and patience we can find why we feel the way we do and ultimately allow for a new possibility of what to do or not do next.

If you've had many relationships and you find yourself now holding back, what new opportunity exists here for you? Sometimes just hanging out in the unknown is scary but it may be precisely the action, or the non-action required.

We live in a non-action that emphasizes and reinforces doing. How many of us keep ourselves so

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Actually, let's be grown ups about this issue ... gay marriage is not the most urgent issue on the Obama administration's plate at the moment. And, let's support Rep. Barney Frank for his honest and mature attitude about the issue and for his continuing to support the President, believing that Obama will eventually "do the right thing" about gay marriage. Are we all disappointed that the gay marriage issue is not going to pass through in the national agenda right now? Of course. Yet, if we observe the "first things first" paradigm, we can be adult and, more important "political" about this issue. It is one of a long line of reforms that we expect from the Obama administration. They will have 8 years to accomplish many things. Gay marriage needs to stand in line behind world peace, universal healthcare, economic stability and educational reforms. Sorry, I place those things before marriage of any stripe. I just think we must accept this. Take a deep breathe and ... be patient.

—Michele Reiter, Haydenville, MA

Dear Editor,
I feel that the Obama administration has left us without any cover. It's like being sent to Iran now without our guns. I am so disappointed in this new administration because I voted for Obama.

—Richard H., Hartford, CT

Dear Editor,
Great article on Kate Clinton & loved the show! —F. Samuels, Chicopee, MA

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Kate Clinton on Stonewall 40



By: Kate Clinton/TRT Special

On an early morning flight from Orlando, after appearing at the 19th Annual Gay Days at Disneyworld, I was "sirred" twice by a cab driver and flight attendant. All before 7 a.m. I would have thought the brand new faux leopard Croc flats I was sporting would have thrown them off. Or that the "Gay Day" banners everywhere would have heightened their threat levels to rainbow.

Usually I find mistaken identification an embarrassment or irritant. In past years I would correct quickly with "That's M'am not Sir," and then try to lessen their discomfort. But this 40th anniversary of Stonewall, I wear the gaffe as a badge of pride. I stare them down. Even if they seem remorseful, I don't help them through their moment. In solidarity with the unsung butch lesbians who were with the fags and drag queens at the Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village in 1969, I have been doing my own version of butching it up.

It used to be hard to find a NY gay person of a certain age who did not claim to have been at the Stonewall Riots. I am a New Yorker of that certain age, but I most certainly was not at the Stonewall Riots. In 1969 I had just graduated from a small Jesuit college in upstate New York. Insert "Class of 69" joke here.

I was a member of the Gay Resistance. I was trying not to come out. Because of that resistance, I could not and then would not hear the news of gay liberation spreading upstate from Greenwich Village. Though pre-internet, the Stonewall message quickly reached upstate gays in the anti-Vietnam war, women's liberation and civil rights movement. Before long even my little town in upstate New York had out gay activists organizing, educating and agitating.

And, they had the best parties. At one I met a brilliant lesbian Political Science professor, fired from her tenured job because of her anti-war activism. Hesitantly, I invited her and her

partner over for dinner in the apartment that by then I "shared with a teacher friend". On the apartment tour, before I could point out my bedroom, she gleefully yelled to her partner, "Here's the fake bedroom!" Perhaps it was my cinder block bed with the Indian bedspread that tipped her off.

With my don't ask, don't tell cover blown by my out and outrageous new lesbian friends, I slowly began to come out. First to my girlfriend at the time, to more friends and then to family. Finally, to make up for lost time, I just grabbed a microphone and have yapped about it for twenty-eight years.

Of course there had been gays and lesbian activists in the in the 1950s and early 60s: The Mattachine Society, The Daughters of Bilitis, The Society of Individual Rights, the North American Homophile Organization. I am in awe of their courage. The rage and outrage of the Stonewall Inn fags, butch dykes and drag queens, who had finally had enough, kicked the courage of early gay activists to another level of visibility.

Back in the day, only 25% of my generation came out before the age of eighteen. It was 31% in the generation after me. Today 57% come out before the age of eighteen. Our challenge today is certainly to transform gay visibility into LGBT action. The reaction to Prop Hates promises a new generation of rage and outrage that will pass trans-inclusive ENDA, overturn DOMA, abolish Don't Ask Don't Tell, and enact federal marriage equality.

But just as Stonewall and the gay liberation movement came from anti-war, women's liberation and civil rights activism, we will only succeed if we reinvent ourselves into those activism. To pass ENDA we must be part of the labor. To overturn DADT we must work for peace. To repeal DOMA and attain marriage equality we must work with women and people of color.

Think of it as Stonewall rebooted. It's a size fourteen and a half stiletto. Today in honor of my butch forebears, I'm wearing only two items of women's clothing.

other day extending a few more benefits to federal employees in same-sex relationships. Hurrah.

This hasn't been quite the merry-go-round the White House was hoping for. A year ago, we would have been elated for this piece of candy from Washington, DC. Now, it's seemingly pissed a whole lotta people off; a bit of "too little, too late" from the Obama we know promised so much more during his campaign Invisible. Except when noticeably absent donor dollars makes us quite visible.

Like the clouds, "rough" seems to be the way it will be for our community for some time to come. Use your super powers and show yourself. Be visible. Be the piece in the chain that makes all the difference. Your community and your future country will thank you for it.

** Suzan Ambrose often sleeps late on these hot summer days and tries too catch up on her mystery novel reading when she's not writing diligently for The Rainbow Times.*

Couch from Page 2

are asking (begging) for our rights, pleading for "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" to be repealed or daring to hope for marriage equality in all 50 states. For those things, we're as noticeable as servants at a party; pretty much, nonexistent. In our proper places and we'd better not forget who's in charge.

But for this big money-shaking fundraiser, "Come out, come out, wherever you are; we need your cash!" seems to be the underlying feeling that many folks feel is coming from the DNC. And with the Obama administration making not much of a shift in policy from the Bush years concerning the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), even publicly equating gay marriage with incest, let's just say a few high-ranking gay peeps, who were all set to write big, fat checks to the DNC, are a bit enraged. The HRC and others are screaming: "Boycott!"

In response to this unexpected queer pan-demonium, Obama signed a little thing the

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In 'The Name of God'

Faith, Family, and God: "Woe is me"

By Paul P. Jesepe*

Let's face it. Many of us have an occasional self-pity fest. "Woe is me," is a common refrain. It's easier to embrace the drama than accept the harsh truth that pity is a form of narcissism. No matter what spiritual, emotional, or physical affliction or challenge we're faced with there are many in the world experiencing the exact same thing. It's life. We need to get over it.

Don't get me wrong wallowing in self-pity can justify one of my infamous and legendary swine outs - a pumpkin pie or two, or a few pounds of Italian pastry, or several dozen pehdehheh (that's Ukrainian for the commonly known pierogi) with buttered onions and many dollops of sour cream, or a delicious moist yellow birthday cake with frosting

made of Crisco and powdered sugar, or ... well, you get the "big" picture. Fortunately, it "only" happens once or twice a year.

After I get over my self-induced sugar bender, if I go the pie, cake or pastry route, my better angels get me grounded again. In addition to reminding me that it will be a steady diet of protein shakes for the next several days, the angels put things back into perspective.

Thomas Merton, one of the Twentieth Century's great theologians, commented that when someone chooses to swim in the abyss of self-pity he or she does so "to taste the rotten luxury of knowing [oneself] to be lost." In short, it's easier to give up than try. It's easier to hide behind self-pity than to confront, battle, and overcome.

He further reflected that "despair is the ultimate development of a pride so great and so stiff-necked that it selects the absolute misery of damnation rather than accept happiness. . ."

I can empathize with those who ask "Why bother if something will again end in failure, disappointment, heart-ache, etc?" Yet it's worth bothering because it's in the journey that come answers, resilience, perspective, and deeper consciousness that can lead to joy and happiness. It's in that journey we affirm our humanness. It's in the struggle that we feel alive.

Earlier this year I had the opportunity to enjoy Paris. One of the first things I noticed among the Parisians is that they work to live. They don't live to work. It was refreshing. A simple dinner with a bottle or two of wine (which has no sulfites) is a simple, wonderful pleasure. It's in those special moments you feel especially connected with the person with whom you're sharing a meal. Who has time for any self-pity?

I made a pilgrimage to the grave of Edith

Piaf and left roses at the gravesite of my muse. In my head I could hear her sing one of my favorite songs, "I Shall Have No Regrets." Despite a less than charmed life that included losing the love of her life in a plane crash Edith never allowed self-pity to deny her of the many joys and pleasures of life. It's a lesson she learned at an early age.

In song and interviews "the Little Sparrow" reflectively looked back on the difficulties of her life, but never stared and wasted time. She had no regrets. You can't love life and live it to the fullest if you let self-pity interfere. Allowing self-pity the upper hand even for a short period is time lost. It's a tough lesson to learn, but one worth learning and never forgetting.

* Paul is a practicing attorney in Albany, priest and prelate in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and author of "Crucifying Jesus and Secularizing America - the Republic of Faith without Wisdom." He may be reached at VladykaPaulPeter@aol.com.

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C'mon Out from Page 2

busy, we rarely have time to just stop, sit and listen to a deeper inner voice? Listening, I believe is the most important thing we can do for ourselves, in any circumstance. Instead so many of us rush to make important decisions or to fix something and can not allow the inner wisdom and truth within (and it is always there) to emerge. Trusting this will happen is difficult. Sitting and allowing the unknown to just be, is one of life's big challenges.

Louise what I am suggesting is that you not pursue a new relationship at this time. Your holding back has meaning. Quiet yourself, sit and listen for what this hesitation is telling you. We want to know what life will bring. We can put enormous energy into trying or forcing things to happen. And often we get in our own way. Instead Louise, take this opportunity to try something new. Trust and see what you will find. Life has a way of showing itself, if we can be patient and allow the new to unfold.

The best to you, Tetty

C'mon Out! Submit your questions to Tetty Gorfine, Director of LifeCourse Counseling Center. Simply go to www.lifecourse.net and click on "Ask Us A Question." All questions will be answered on the bulletin board. One or two will be printed next month here in *The Rainbow Times*.

* Tetty also been a psychotherapist since 1980. She has worked extensively with LGBTQ individuals, couples and groups and has supervised both clinicians and therapists in training. Her vision and leadership spirited nearly all of LifeCourse Counseling Center's programs. Tetty has also been on numerous radio talk shows and television programs. She has presented at professional conferences on topics pertinent to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals.

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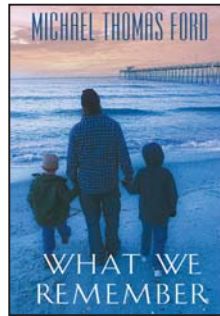
Book Marks: Merv Griffin: A Life in the Closet

By: **Richard Labonte**

[*Smash the Church, Smash the State! The Early Years of Gay Liberation*, edited by Tommi Aviccoli Mecca, City Lights Books, 320 pages, \$17.95 paper.]

The personal is riotously political and the history is tangibly personal in this anthology of diverse, down-to-earth reflections on the early days of Gay Liberation, from both queers who were there, and from others looking back 40 years later. Section one in particular, "Out of the Bars and Into the Streets," reclaims and recalls the heady era of Stonewall, getting stoned and lobbing metaphorical (and actual) stones at our oppressors. Other sections touch on the feminist movement, drag queens and transgender queers. In a closing essay demonstrating that activism shouldn't ever die, Merle Woo declaims: "Stonewall was a riot - now we need a revolution." Aviccoli Mecca, himself a longtime activist who marched the streets of Philadelphia not long after the 1969 bar riot in Greenwich Village, has compiled a vivid, colorful history, blending original essays, poems and songs with reprints of several historical manifestos and brief biographical vignettes of activists no longer alive to craft a co-generated collection that is by turns emotional, joyous, poignant, even sometimes contradictory - and always defiant.

[*What We Remember*, by Michael Thomas



leaving behind stoic wife Ada, determined at any emotional cost to hold her family together, and three nymbled children, including gay teenager Billy, destined to grow up gay and confused. When his body surfaces, Billy's older brother, James - now a big city district attorney - returns home to handle the fallout, only to become the prime suspect in his father's murder. James' accuser? His surly brother-in-law Nate Derry, now married to his sister, who has borne a grudge ever since James, years back, dated Nate's beloved - and suddenly pregnant—stepsister. With a chronology that hops nimbly between 1982 and 1991, and with overlapping points of view that spotlight the fallibility of memory

and the treachery of lies, Ford's intricate jigsaw puzzle of a novel zeros in on the sort of depravity—in this case, heterosexual depravity—that often rots the core of families which, on the surface, appear to be normalcy incarnate.

As this flashback-powered mystery opens, small-town sheriff Daniel McCloud has been missing for eight years,

and the treachery of lies, Ford's intricate jigsaw puzzle of a novel zeros in on the sort of depravity—in this case, heterosexual depravity—that often rots the core of families which, on the surface, appear to be normalcy incarnate.

[*Fist of the Spider Woman: Tales of Fear and Queer Desire*, edited by Amber Dawn. Arsenal Pulp Press, 192 pages, \$17.95 paper].

There's a thin line between fear and desire, and the contributors to this woman-centric manipulation of the horror genre delight in erasing it. A few of the 16 contributions deal with traditional shivers: For example, Fionna Zedde writes, erotically, about lesbian vampires, a clichéd theme handled here fiercely. A couple are more campy: Michelle Tea is afeared of...public lice. But a majority of the stories are deeper, darker and psychologically intense. Among them: Megan Milks' creepy fantasy, "Slug," about a woman having sex with that most slimy of creatures; Mette Bach's "All You Can Be," about the violation of trust between two women; Aurelia T. Evans' "In Circles," an unsettling story about an intersex woman's equation of genital corrective surgery and mutilation at the hands of a mystical Bloody Mary; and Suki Lee's gripping "Sido," about the emotional violence and physical sexuality of a predatory Parisian landlady. What most tales have in common is their inversion of the stereotypical damsel-in-

distress motif of horror fiction. There are no fair ladies fainting away in this subversive anthology.

[*Merv Griffin: A Life in the Closet*, by Darwin Porter. Blood Moon Productions, 598 pages, \$26.95 hardcover.]

Darwin Porter tears the door off Merv Griffin's queer closet with gusto in this resoundingly researched biography. (With a personal connection: As a college senior, Porter hired Griffin to sing at a graduation dance, and the two developed a friendship.) Though often overused, "page-turner" more than applies. Most every paragraph bristles with he-slept-with revelations about Merv, who schmoozed, seduced and made a play for every Tom, Dick and Harry in showbiz - emphasis on the dicks. Seduced as a teenager by Errol Flynn, he cavorted early on with such stars as Montgomery Clift and Marlon Brando (with brief detours to the beds of Judy Garland and Marilyn Monroe) and, later in life, with hired hustlers and porn stars, all the while pretending to be the paramour of glamorous Eva Gabor. Sexual escapades aside, Porter's insightful assessment of the man's career arc - from brash boy who staged backyard entertainment, to struggling big band crooner, to king (or queen) of daytime talk shows, to made-by-TV mogul—brims with insider gossip writ large, smart and with great style.

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state of mind.

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After that date, regular priced tickets can be purchased at www.cirquedusoleil.com.

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Trans Opinions & More

Transactivism: Living in stealth or living out & in the open, what's a Trans to Do?

By: **Deja Nicole Greenlaw**/TRT Columnist

When a Trans person has decided to transition they now have the decision of whether to live in stealth (never let on that you were born physically in the other gender and that you were always the current transitioned gender), or to live out and in the open. Both have their pluses and minuses. It's a huge decision to make and the ramifications of each choice are very different!

Let's say I decided to live stealth. First, I would have to move away from the area which I live in now. You see, all my friends here know about me, all my coworkers know about me, my whole family knows about me, everyone I know knows about me. If I wanted to live in stealth, I would have to either quit my job and find a new job in the new area or I could quietly transfer to another area. Quitting is easy, but finding a new job or transferring would be hard. What would I put on my resume? Who would I use for contacts? I would have to line up people from my current job to "play along" with me to my new prospective employer. Hopefully, they won't slip and out me.

Then, I would be living in a new area where I don't know anyone. I would either have to be

somewhat of a recluse or I would have to try and meet some people. It would be lonely, at least in the beginning anyway. No friends, no support, no one to talk to, or to vent my problems with. Oh, I could use the internet and/or the telephone but it's not the same as face-to-face human contact. I would most likely cry a lot and feel very alone.

Every step of my life I would be on guard, making sure that I don't "slip up" and "Out" myself. When I do meet people I would have to be very careful of what I say if and when they ask me anything about my life up to now. It would be a nerve wracking and very scary situation to be in. These are the very real negative aspects of it.

For the positives, any new people I meet would view me as a female. I would finally be able to live my life totally as female I could even date heterosexual men who would think of me as female. (It could get sticky though, if they ever found out that I was born male. Whoops! That's a big and possibly heart-breaking or maybe even dangerous negative!)



DEJA NICOLE GREENLAW

It's really hard to live in stealth. I would have to look, talk, walk and act as a female at all times with no slip ups. When I go to buy a car or a phone or a house or anything the dreaded credit checks would come. Computers and record keeping is everywhere now and it would only be a matter of time when some creditor finds out from my past credit that I used to be male. A Human Resource person at work could accidentally find out too! And, how could I ever have my old friends and coworkers and my own family members visit me in my new area? It brings many questions and potentially sticky situations, and it would be hard to deal with these instances.

Now let's say I opt to live out and in the open. Everyone would know that I was living as a man before. Yes, all the people I come in contact with will know about my male past! It would be very hard to date heterosexual men who mostly are squeamish about dating a Transwoman. My dates would have to be okay with me but they would know up front-what my story is.

But at the same time I would not be living in fear that I would be "found out" at any time. I wouldn't have to cover all of my tracks and fret every day if I covered them well enough or not. Let me tell you that it's a lot

more peaceful for your soul if you live out and in the open!

Oh, there will be people who don't understand me and some that won't even like me, but there will be many others who respect my honesty and integrity in living as who I truly am. Besides, if I live out and in the open, everyone would see me and finally know what a Transwoman is. I would be a neighbor, a friend, a coworker, a family member, a community member, etc. They would get used to be and see that it's no big deal to be Transgender. They would see that I am a real person and that I have human wants and needs and needs for rights just as they have. I would help make the word, Transgender, "normal" to them and I would also help to "pave the way" for a little easier life for future Transpeople.

As Harvey Milk said, "Come out, come out wherever you are!" He knew what would happen. He knew what he was talking about!

As you can probably tell, I choose to live out and in the open.

But the choice is up to each of you my Transfriends, live in stealth or live out and in the open. Please think long and carefully and try as best as you can to be prepared to meet the good and the bad results of your choice. I wish you the best of luck!

An Act of Faith unites religious communities for Transgender Rights

By: **Tynan Power**TRT Columnist

On Thursday June 4th, people from more than a dozen local congregations filled the sanctuary at Edwards Church for an interfaith prayer service in support of transgender rights. The event, entitled *An Act of Faith*, featured fourteen speakers, including transgender clergy and lay-leaders, as well as allied religious leaders.

An Act of Faith grew out of momentum generated by an event of the same name held in Boston in January. Rabbi Riqi Kosovski and Jennifer Levi attended the Boston event and brought their enthusiasm back to their synagogue in Northampton. Soon a steering committee made up of Beit Ahavah members and friends began planning for An Act of Faith. The steering committee reached out to local congregations and national organizations, eventu-



Rabbi Justin David, Congregation B'nai Israel, talks to the attendees.

ally gaining the support of 11 local co-sponsoring congregations and 10 co-sponsoring national and state-wide organizations.

An Act of Faith's attendees had a rare chance to hear voices from Christianity, Judaism,

Islam and Buddhism, as well as from interfaith and secular organizations working for transgender rights. Some spoke of their personal spiritual journeys as transgender religious leaders. Jan Nettler, the President of the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence, offered a perspective as a lay-leader who feels blessed to have had a relatively easy path to leadership but is mindful of the struggles many transgender people face in their places of worship. With similar mindfulness, the organizers maintained a hope for the event that it could welcome people who had felt unwelcome in places of worship due to their gender identity or expression.

"This evening is a holy one: a night in which we have come together to lift up a people who have traveled far and seen much, and who wish to be recognized as the people we are, the people we have been, and the people we are called

to become," said In his address, said Rev. Cameron Partridge in his address.

While the event was primarily spiritual, An Act of Faith also addressed the legal struggle of transgender people for protection from discrimination. Gunner Scott, head of the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC), spoke eloquently about the organization's efforts to pass "An Act Relative to Gender-Based Discrimination and Hate Crimes" (House Bill #1728 and Senate Bill #1687), currently being considered by the Massachusetts legislature. He noted that a great deal of testimony has been gathered from transgender individuals, but there is always a need for support and testimony from non-transgender allies.

See Act of Faith on Page 8



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GO BO: Colt Model Bo Dixon competes for body building title

By: Tyson Corban/Special to TRT

Bo Dixon is the ultimate Colt man. His muscle worship video remains one of the studio's most popular solo films.

What many fans don't know about Bo is that he is also a professional body builder. In fact this summer, he will compete as an openly gay man for the Mr. Georgia title.

We chatted with the thick-bearded powerhouse about his battle for the title and how nude photos on the internet nearly derailed his bodybuilding career.

TC. How is it being an out gay man in a hyper-masculine, testosterone-driven industry like professional body building?

BD. When competing at a show, my focus is on winning. I'm never thinking, "I am a gay bodybuilder." I'm thinking of how my trainers and coaches have done the best they can to prepare me for this event and how I want to do the best I can for them and for me.

Q. How are you treated by other athletes?

A. In general, I'm treated like any other athlete but at a recent competition in Los Angeles, I did notice some gay bodybuilders would not approach me after I publicly kissed my partner on the lips. Many gay athletes fear being black balled.

Q. Have you encountered any bias from judges?

A. Judges are supposed to evaluate athletes strictly on mass, proportions, balance and showmanship. But yes, there have been times that I suspected a judge's opinion was fogged by their feelings towards gay men.

Q. How did you begin posing for gay muscle worship videos?

A. At most competitions, there are people that scout bodybuilders for the Gay Male Muscle Worship industry. Colt and studios like them actually send agents to find their next stars. One day I was approached and a few weeks later, I was meeting with Colt executives.

Q. How did the body building industry react to your appearing on the cover of a Colt calendar?

A. They didn't really know about it. Those that did distanced themselves from me for fear of others thinking they might be gay.

Q. Were you making a statement by appearing in the calendar or did you simply see it as an opportunity to show off your physique?

A. It was an opportunity to show off what I had accomplished through years of hard work. Growing up, I was a 130-pound bean-pole. I'll always be that skinny kid inside but this was my chance to show the world the new me.

Q. How did you go from Colt to porn?

A. I was young and naïve. I wanted people to like me. But it was wrong from the start. My first day on the set, I was ready to run out the door. I was worried, though, that the internet bloggers would have a field day saying I was a coward or sissy. Also, I am a southern gentleman. In the south, when you agree to do something, you do it. I was trapped in my own ethics and obligation.

Q. What did appearing in gay porn cost you and your career?

A. I had no clue that the adult film company would sell my images all over the Internet. They're everywhere! Today, my image is pro-



Photo by: www.sublimemiami.com

BO DIXON

moting gay muscle worship sites, muscle bear parties, sex sites, dating sites... you name it! I don't make a dime from any of the parties or sites I'm promoting, nor do I have any control over who uses my images.

Q. Many of the images on the internet are extremely graphic.

A. I shot the film three months before meeting my partner so he was aware of it. We didn't think it would be too big a deal because we foolishly believed it would be for dvd release only. We weren't prepared to see images of me having sex with another man splashed all over the Internet and posted in blogs.

Q. You didn't think that appearing in an adult film might make you a porn "star"?

A. The only thing I knew about adult films was that they were rented or sold in the back of a video store. I thought it was a small underground industry. I didn't know there

would be worldwide distribution in multimedia via the internet. I didn't realize the photos would be searchable through Google.

Q. What did you do when you became aware that the film was not going to be something you could sweep under the rug?

A. I took a year off from competitions and was ready to hang up my posing trunks. It was awful.

Q. How did your partner react?

A. My partner has been my real support sys-

tem through it all. He made me realize that shooting the video was a mistake that I'll have to accept and deal with it. It is my tattoo to wear.

Q. Is it true that you now battle internet stalkers?

A. The Internet has become the doorway for crazy people to get into your home and personal life. I have trusted a few bad people that I met online. One fan stole my cell phone and called everyone on it to get information about me and my relationships. He then posted horrific lies about me and linked it with search engines under Bo Dixon. Unfortunately, the government does not have many laws to protect anyone from cyber bullies.

Q. Isn't that why most adult stars use stage names?

A. Stage names aren't enough. Obsessed fans will dig as far as they can to find out your personal information. There are gay men and bloggers that find gratification in exposing adult stars for who they really are.

Q. What advice would you give to a young man thinking about entering porn?

A. If you get into the business, just know that the money does not pay for you to have a bodyguard or extra security. You're paid once and that's it. It can be tough because the studio creates a persona for you and then you're expected to act like your sexual character in public.

Q. Where do you go from here?

A. The videos are so far behind me now. People will watch them forever but I have continued to train and hope to win the overall title at my next bodybuilding contest. If I win, I am on to the nationals.

Q. What is the most important lesson you have learned in your career?

A. I have learned to embrace it all - my bodybuilding, my past and great fans. People tell me that I inspire them to get off the couch and go to the gym. On my Facebook Fan page I tell people what I am eating, give them tips on training and I show them that a man over 40 can still look hot.

For more information or to contact Bo online visit: www.facebook.com/bodixon

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Queertations & the Creep of the Week Winner

Queertations: Say what?!

By: Rex Wockner

"I was not in favor of his (Obama's) coming out for same-sex marriage when he first got elected. But I would hope he would be by the time he runs for re-election."

—Gay U.S. Rep. **Barney Frank**, D-Mass., to GQ, June 12.

"The gays aren't going to break marriage. Think about it: They're gay. They'll probably spruce it up and make it a little nicer."

—**Eric McCormack**, *Will from Will & Grace*, speaking from the stage at *Meet in the Middle for Equality*, May 30 in Fresno, Calif.

"It was like a moment of truth. (A reporter) asked me the question (of whether I was looking to date a man or a woman) and I thought, Hmm, do I say the truth, or do I just say, 'It's none of your business,' which is my standard answer? I said: 'You know, I'm just going to say the truth. Definitely a woman.'"

—**Top Gun** actress **Kelly McGillis** to *People* magazine, May 28.

"Sometimes people ask me, 'How does being gay affect the way that you see the world?' And I'm, like, 'I don't know, I've been gay since I was 17!' I've never not been gay and seen the world. So I've never been a broadcaster who didn't have an AIDS activist background. So I don't know how it changed me. I mean, it's definitely changed some of my political orientation. I learned from the AIDS movement that people should speak for themselves. And I think that maybe manifests on my show ... in that I do long introductions before I let guests talk usually, but then the payoff is that they get to talk without being interrupted."

—**MSNBC** anchor **Rachel Maddow** to *Poz* magazine, June issue.

"I understand why this discussion (of whether gay journalists are or should be activists) exists in North America where too many journalists still worship the false god of 'objectivity,' a nonexistent state of mind. I can also see why a gay journalist working in a mainstream paper has to avoid getting the 'activist' label. But I'm saddened that some journalists working at gay papers won't embrace the label. ... If we're doing our jobs, aren't we helping our communities find their place in the sun in a world that still largely hates homos? How do you really help your lesbian and gay readers without getting in the battle beside them? You don't. Of course, you still have to keep your head, be analytical and show perspective. But you can do that while admitting you're an activist journalist."

—**Gareth Kirkby**, editor in chief of *The Guide* magazine, to the gay press newsletter *Press Pass Q*, June issue.

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Lesbian Best Sellers*

1. She Likes Girls 4:...
2. The L Word: Season 6
3. The Secrets
4. Itty Bitty Titty Committee
5. Drifting Flowers
6. Girl Play
7. Butch Jamie
8. Le Japon Rouge
9. Girl + Girl: Classic...
10. Village Affair, A

* By wolfevideo.com

Gay Best Sellers*

1. Were the World Mine
2. Mulligans
3. Pedro
4. The New Twenty
5. Whirlwind
6. Boy Crush
7. Lilies
8. Milk
9. Holding Trevor
10. Newcastle

* By wolfevideo.com

Creep of the Week: Philip Irvin

By: D'Anne Witkowski

Come out, come out wherever you are. And if you happen to be a Seattle Public Utilities employee and a member of the city's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning and Friends group, well, you'd best make a couple of important phone calls.

Philip Irvin, a City Lights employee and a well-known anti-gay crusader in Seattle, filed a public disclosure request to get the names of the folks in the group.

The group said "hell no" and the city originally sided with them. Until the city realized that, well, they kind of had to release the members' names because it really was public info.

"The city sympathizes with the concerns that plaintiffs have expressed," a city attorney said. "Nonetheless, the city believes that the Public Records Act obligates it to disclose the records at issue."

The LGBT group has since filed for an injunction to block the release, but with the city itself arguing in Irvin's favor, it seems unlikely that the group will prevail.

So just who is Philip Irvin and why does he want the names to begin with? According to the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Irvin "sees himself as the victim of bigotry by the city and intends to form an employee group for former homosexuals."

Describing his intentions on the Faith and Freedom Network Web site, Irvin claims he was just "curious to find out who was using city resources." But no doubt his "curiosity" was peaked by more than his identity as a taxpayer.

"Call me a homophobe if you want to but I don't think the city should fund a secret gay employees group," Irvin said.

Dan Savage, editor of Seattle's the Stranger newspaper and author of the syndicated advice

column *Savage Love*, describes Irvin as a "semi-professional homophobe" and "an anti-gay Christian nutcase." Savage, however, also agrees with Irvin, at least on this one issue.

"You're a homophobe, Phil, but you're right: the city shouldn't be funding secret groups for gay employees," wrote Savage on *Slog*, the Stranger's blog. "And if SPU's gay group is an official city group, and it receives funding from the city, it should be subject to the same rules and regulations regarding openness and public disclosure that all other city groups, agencies, individual employees, etc., are subject to."

Of course, there's more to this fight than mere procedure. But Savage knows that.

"And that's easy for me to say, I suppose, sitting here at the Stranger, where everyone is gay and everything is glorious," Savage writes. "What about SPU's closeted employees? What about their privacy? Privacy is a concern for some gays and lesbians - for closeted ones - in way that it isn't for, say, women at SPU who might form an employee's group. But the lesson here is this: If you're not out, an employee group funded by the city - and subject to public records requests - isn't the right support group for you."

Granted, Savage doesn't have a lot of patience with closeted folks, but he has a good point. However, it's going to be a rough transition for some folks in that LGBT employee group.

Considering Irvin's anti-gay notoriety, he knows good and damned well how high the stakes are for any gay and lesbian employees who haven't come out of the closet. Outside their employee group, the wider world is a much scarier place. And folks like Irvin are exactly why. Can't exactly blame them for not wanting to put their names in his hands.

Act of Faith from Page 6

Politics and religion admittedly do not always make good bedfellows, yet the Interfaith Coalition for Transgender Equality offers a compelling argument for the alliance in its Declaration in support of the bill: "People of all gender identities and expressions, including transgender people, are born into, enter into, or are called to many faiths. Our faith traditions help to ground and support us in our lifelong quests for fulfillment and responsibility to one another. All of our traditions respect the dignity of each and every human being and recognize our connection to one another. Because of this connection, the persecution of a person on the basis of gender identity or expression is an injury, not only to an individual, but to everyone connected to that person: to the person's family, friends, and spiritual community."

Organizers felt the event was more successful than expected and anticipated more such events.

"Transpeople and our loved ones have been and are hurt, in faith communities and the rest of the world," wrote Mycroft Masada Holmes through his blog on the ICTE website. "We and our allies have much work and a long jour-

ney ahead of us, towards our inclusion in communities of faith and social justice. Tonight's service acknowledged all of that, and yet was also so healing and hopeful. Tonight is part of a movement that will transform this state and country and beyond."

Local speakers at the event included Rev. Dr. Peter Kokos, Pastor, Edwards Church; Rabbi Riqi Kosovske, Beit Ahavah; Rev. Dr. Andrea Ayvazian, Haydenville Congregational Church; Rabbi David Bauer, Jewish Community of Amherst; Minister Louis Mitchell, Deacon of South Congegational Church and Minister of Recovering the Promise Ministries; Jan Nettler, President, Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence; Yohah Ralph, in care at First Churches; Arinna Weisman, Insight Meditation Center of Pioneer Valley; Rabbi Justin David, Congregation B'nai Israel; and Jennifer Levi, Director of the Transgender Rights Project of GLAD.

To join the Interfaith Coalition for Transgender Equality, visit www.interfaith-coalition.org. Detailed information about transgender rights efforts in Massachusetts and how you can get involved is available at www.massipc.org.

Deep Inside Hollywood: The L Word movie requests?



By: Romeo San Vicente

Keeping the faith with *The L Word*

Showtime didn't pick up *The Farm*, the *The L Word* spinoff about Alice in prison. That's off the table for now. And those post-finale webisodes? Did they solve the mystery of Jenny's death? Nope. But creator Ilene Chaiken has a plan: An *L Word* movie. It worked for *Sex and the City*. It even worked for *Noah's Arc*. You know what? It even worked for *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*. So it can work for the craziest gang of lipstick lesbians that pop culture ever produced, right? Sure it can, just as soon as Chaiken finishes the script and gets backers and corals her cast and a million other things fall into place. But the hardcore fans (Romeo among them) believe wholeheartedly in the bright future of this project. Three requests, though, Ms. Chaiken: 1) Bring Jenny back to life 2) Let Max lose the fake facial hair 3) Dawn Denbo!

You Again's gang of gay allies How many times have you watched a trailer for a movie you probably didn't care about, only to see a favorite actress in the cast that causes you to say, "Oh, I love her!" Suddenly it's on your must-see list, right? Well, some gay-casting agent must have worked on Disney's latest feature *You Again* because the cast is like a current who's-who of queer allies and oh-I-love-hers: *Wicked's* gay-rights-supporting Christian diva Kristin Chenoweth, Jamie Lee Curtis, *Golden Girls* icon Betty White, *Veronica Mars/Gossip Girl's* Kristen Bell and lesbian-favorite Sigourney Weaver are all working on the comedy about a woman trying to stop the wedding of her brother to the mean girl who bullied her in high school. In production right now, it's set for release sometime in 2010 and already sounds like a bride war worth watching.

Linda Hunt will be back shortly

When Hollywood doesn't know quite what to do with you, even when you're an Oscar winner, sometimes it's just good to hook up with a steady paycheck. And nothing spells steady like a starring role on one of television's ubiquitous crime-procedural shows. Which is why it's nice to know that Linda Hunt, one of Hollywood's most talented and most unique actors, will appear regularly on the upcoming *NCIS: LA*. She won her Academy Award for playing a man in 1982's *The Year of Living Dangerously* and acclaim for her role as Gertrude Stein's lover Alice B. Toklas in *Waiting For The Moon*. So while offbeat roles like that may be a world away from the acting skills needed to utter almost-certain *NCIS*-centric dialogue like, "Get this DNA to the lab right now!" her presence is sure to elevate the material. The crime-solving gets underway this fall.

Brent Corrigan acts with his clothes on

They called him the Traci Lords of gay adult film when, a few years back, it was discovered that Brent Corrigan, who would later go on to star in titles like *The Porne Ultimatum*, had lied just the tiniest bit about his age, handed the director a fake I.D. and jump-started his career as a naked sex-tink at age 17. But that was then. Now the notorious young star has set his sights on a crossover career with a lead role in the forthcoming *Judas Kiss*, a gay coming-of-age fantasy feature. It won't be Corrigan's first dip in the non-porn pool, as he's already been seen in the raunchy comedy *Another Gay Sequel: Gays Gone Wild!* and had a blink-and-you'll-miss-him cameo in *Milk*. Romeo thinks it would be a real breakthrough if Corrigan acted in this indie feature (due in 2010, by the way), watched it become a huge hit, then turned around and starred in the porn knockoff version, too.

* Romeo San Vicente did volunteer stunt work in *The Porne Ultimatum* but his scenes were left on the cutting room floor. He can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.



LEISHA HAILEY

Photo: Don Flood/Showtime

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Visión Latina

Desde Cuba comparto mis 50 años de "revolución" Cubana



By: Wilfred Labiosa*

Desde Cuba comparto Mi 50 años de "revolución" Cubana. Escribo la introducción de este artículo que es una nota electrónica que mi amigo José me escribió la respuesta de compartir con él artículos que aparecen en los medios de E.U.A. Fui a Cuba, por primera vez, hace unos meses atrás y me encontré que Cuba es increíble, bella como fea, "democrática" como socialista, pero sobre todo un país lleno de gente buena, amigable, y sobre todo patriótica que sufre más de lo que nos imaginamos pero viven contentos de poder vivir.

Mira, todo lo que dicen en los artículos que me envías es real, y es así como se vive aquí (en Cuba) desde que tengo uso de razón y conocimiento para poder discernir o escoger mi manera de desear o soñar con algún tipo de futuro.

Hay tantas cosas de que compartir que sería imposible para el mejor cronista poder plasmarlas en blanco y negro. Muchas situaciones, miedos, desengaños, desesperos, desesperanzas, inconformidades, etc., sólo las podemos sentir los que las sufrimos a diario y las llevamos en silencio por dentro, casi hasta los huesos, pero te repito que es imposible poder transmitir este sentimiento por más que uno quiera hacerse entender.

En Cuba, desde el mismo inicio o "Triunfo de



A busy Intersection of Havana, Cuba, Calle Brasil y Mercaderes. Photo by José, 03/09.

la Revolución" en 1959, se creó un "mecanismo" bien engrasado, con el cual poco a poco fueron cercenando o amputando las libertades individuales existentes y te hacen creer "que no las mereces" pues te pueden "hacer daño." Es verdad, que se llevó medicina, educación, zapatos, escuelas, y otras cosas a lugares donde existían poblaciones enteras "olvidadas" y en absoluta miseria; pero no era toda Cuba la que sufría, como también es verdad que muchos negocios o propiedades habían sido adquiridos de forma ilícita, pero no era la generalidad en este país.

El otro día me reía de una "entrevista" que le hacían a la "Bloguera" más famosa y hasta cierto punto valiente de Cuba: Yoani Sánchez (digo

lo de "valiente" pues ella no depende de un salario pagado por el estado para vivir, además en Cuba nadie la conoce, pues para ello hay que acceder a Internet. Y, aquí sólo lo puede hacer una minoría "mínima" y su "blog" está "tiene bloqueado el acceso interno"), en cuestión un "periodista" Argentino le preguntaban acerca del tan "vendido" slogan de la revolución Cubana "Salud Gratuita para todos". En sus respuestas hasta ella se mostró "confundida" pues ha sido tan grande la "propaganda" que muchos creen ciegamente en este concepto, y no es así. Lo que es gratis es la "atención médica" que te digo yo, que soy "asiduo visitante" de los hospitales, que preferiría me la cobraran. "Salud" es una palabra abarcadora tan grande y propia que es imposible que sea gratis, sin el consentimiento personal del que la necesita, pero en esto nadie se detiene a pensar aquí.

Mis medicinas, muchas veces dependen de alguna "donación", y mi dictamen alérgico aún no lo he logrado por "culpa" del "Bloqueo Imperialista", según dicen, pero en Hospitales para dirigentes y funcionarios (que no se mezclan con el pueblo para no contagiarse) no hay falta de nada. Sin embargo, aquí se "atreven" a mencionar como "noticias" las huelgas que suceden en cualquier parte del mundo, por una simple alza de precios en un centavo, cuando muchos salieron a la calle en la Argentina con el llamado "Cacerolazo", aquí se dio mucha publicidad mediática como muestra de lo "perdido" de ese sistema social, pero en el fondo no se decía que las "gente", el "pueblo", salió a las calles a reclamar un derecho y la atención de su gobierno.

Aquí los precios, son un desastre, además las tiendas, o lo que en ellas se ofrece, es como dijera un comentarista televisivo de Miami, son "Tiendas Prostituidas", pues nadie que viva en Cuba, con un salario normal puede comprar en

ellas, cuando el salario medio mensual al cambio no sobrepasa el más alto de los \$15.00 (USD), pues si quieres un refrigerador (\$750.00) o una TV (\$300.00), tienes que vender un "huevo" y la mitad del otro y no te alcanza ... o sales a prostituirte para "resolver" o recibes la ayuda de tu familia que pertenece a "la mafia terrorista de Miami" para comprarlo.

La Revolución ha sufrido algunas transformaciones en el camino, que a veces sea de perder la palabra "revolución" ya que existe diferente como terminología versus manera de vivir. Pero que en la mayoría de ocasiones se ha intentado confundir la palabra "Revolución", "Cuba", "Símbolos Patrios", con la persona de Fidel Castro, por lo que si no estás de acuerdo con el sistema social donde vives, estás en contra de Fidel Castro, por tanto eres un "Contrarrevolucionario" y "recibirás todo el peso aplastante de la Ley" que es "Del pueblo y para el pueblo..."

Mi querido amigo, es difícil, pero aún nos queda lo más importante, al menos en mi caso, orgullo, dignidad y algo de salud, lo demás, solo el tiempo lo dirá. Bueno te dejo por ahora, pues llevo casi tres horas en la cocina haciéndome unos Garbanzos Fritos, en los que me he gastado todo lo que tenía en mis bolsillos ... están cordialmente invitados!

Este artículo fue escrito por José, no escribo su nombre completo para proteger su identidad. El me escribió esta nota electrónica que toco mi corazón y por esa razón le pregunte y me concedió el permiso de publicarla y compartirla con ustedes. Editado y traducido al inglés por Wilfred W. Labiosa. Para información sobre Cuba visita o dona: http://www.acceso.us/acceso_home.htm

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QScopes ARIES (March 20-April 19):

Your home may not be as neat, as large, or as pretty as it could be, but it's home and that's what counts. Still, you could make it neater, and that will help pretty it up - and make more space!

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Your attempts at wit, or at critical analysis, may be sharper than you intend. Focus on being kind, supportive and helpful. Your cleverness and insight will shine through. Talking about what you enjoy can inspire improvements at work.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): With family problems or community politics you can cut through the crap with brutal effectiveness. Do try to be nice about cutting down people's unrealistic hopes. More effective economy begins at home. Set the example you want others to follow.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Your instinct to be helpful is being stimulated with an annoying burst of outspokenness. Your insights are spot-on, but be sure your advice is wanted before you offer it. When you have the chance, write before you speak.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): What's really bothering you is not so much other people stepping on your values, but your own inner demons nagging at the problems in your priorities. Meditate and be ready to let go of things that really have lost importance.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You're being awfully touchy, taking simple offhand comments from friends as harsh criticism. What you need to take seriously is not what they're saying but why those buttons on your ego are so over-exposed and raw.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Know the limits of your authority before you speak out. If you are in any way uncertain, it will undermine you - unless you are clear about what you

know, and what you don't, and are willing to consult an expert on the latter.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Arguments show the limits of friendship, perhaps end a few, or push you to be more accepting. If you remain principled and honest, your real friends will respect your opinions, and vice versa? How much must your friends agree with your opinions?

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 20): Telling others how sexy you are will provoke demands for proof. You may not need to say anything, word gets around! A confident swagger - maybe a bit of leather - will make you irresistible. Looking mature and experienced also helps!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 21-Jan. 19): As clear as the rules of your partnership may be, there are always new wrinkles to iron out. If you're feeling constrained, talk out the issues to resolve needs and issues that might otherwise tempt destructive acting-out.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Although you mean well, your suggestions to coworkers can sound snotty and critical. Bringing cookies, especially home-baked, will help people listen more carefully, and set the tone for your efforts to be nice.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 19): Feeling a bit kinky and inventive? The kitchen can be a treasure trove of erotic toys. Turkey basters and spatulas are easy starts. Or have some whipped cream and fresh fruit in season on hand ... or on something!

* Jack Fertig, a professional astrologer since 1977, is available for personal and business consultations in person in San Francisco or online everywhere. He can be reached at 415-864-8302, through his Web site at www.starjack.com and by e-mail at QScopes@qsyndicate.com.

A Night of Pride for Holyoke LGBT youth

Alternative Prom provides safe space for LGBT youth and allies

By: Alex Morse/Guest Correspondent

HOLYOKE, MA—On Friday May 29th, nearly 500 young people from throughout Western Massachusetts packed the Holiday Inn in Holyoke in honor of the 3rd Annual Western Massachusetts Youth Pride Prom.

Organized by the Holyoke GLBTQ Task Force, the Western Mass Youth Pride Prom creates a safe, fun, and respectful space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and allied young people. Pride Proms are primarily for LGBT young people, a population often unwelcome at traditional high school proms.

Despite the progress that has been made in recent years, LGBT youth continue to be harassed for their sexual orientation and/or gender expression. The Western Mass Youth Pride Prom, and the efforts of the Holyoke GLBTQ Task Force in general, combat forces of oppression such as heterosexism and homophobia by means of education and empowerment.

This year's Western Mass Youth Pride Prom achieved an unprecedented level of success. Nearly 500 hundred young people packed the grand ballroom at the Holiday Inn, where they enjoyed music by DJ Hush. Attendees were also provided with food, prom photos, rain-

bow corsages, and performances by local drag performers, dance groups, singers, and musicians. Yet the best part of all was the fact that the prom was free to everyone.

Nicholas Duclos, a senior at Holyoke High School and one of two emcees at the Prom chose to skip the Holyoke High School Prom because of its high cost. Said Duclos, "Not only is this event creating a safe and supportive space for LGBT people, but its an affordable alternative for those students who don't have the several hundred dollars necessary to attend proms sponsored by their high school." A member of the Holyoke GLBTQ Task Force, Duclos wants to focus on educating the straight community on how to be allies to LGBT efforts.

In addition to the dancing, the Pride Prom also featured a community resource fair with resources and materials. Those organizations distributing information included Tapestry Health Systems, the Holyoke Boys and Girls Club, Pioneer Valley Unity, CareerPoint, Baystate Health Systems, and area religious organizations that affirm LGBT identities.

As in past years, the Pride Prom enjoyed the support of Holyoke Mayor Michael Sullivan, who issued a city proclamation declaring Friday May 29th "Youth Pride Day" in Holyoke in honor of the 3rd Annual Western

Mass Youth Pride Prom. Attendees were greeted by the proclamation as they entered the dance hall, all of whom appreciated the mayor's symbolic gesture.

Organizers of the Prom were adamant about making this year's Youth Pride Prom as inclusive as possible. Not only did the Task Force invite Gay-Straight Alliances and LGBT organizations from across Western Massachusetts, they invited youth groups, schools, and community programs that rarely have a prom experience. LGBT students and their straight allies came not only from schools like Holyoke High and other neighboring school districts, but also from the Holyoke Street School and Westover Job Corps, alternative programs for high-school and college-age young people.

The Western Mass Youth Pride Prom provided momentum to the mission of the BAGLY Prom (Boston Alliance for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth), an annual LGBT prom at Boston City Hall. The Holyoke GLBTQ Task Force recognized a growing need for youth pride events in Western Mass - citing the lack of transportation and organization for youth to attend events in the Boston area. Since the Western Mass Youth Pride Prom's inception in 2007, it has grown larger each year, with 200 in atten-

dance the first year and around 500 this year.

The Western Mass Youth Pride Prom was made possible by aggressive fundraising and the generosity of several local organizations and community agencies. The two biggest donors included BAGLY and Baystate Health Systems, who provided \$2000 and \$1000 respectively. Other donors included: Oz Creations, Northampton High School Gay Straight Alliance, Smith Vocational High School, Valley Psychiatric Services, Tapestry Health Systems, the Holyoke Health Center, Hampshire College, Holyoke High School Gay Straight Alliance, Hampden Wilbraham High School, Always our Children, and The Rainbow Times.

For now, members of the Holyoke GLBTQ Task Force are meeting to evaluate the Prom and thank the Prom sponsors and the more than forty adult chaperones that supervised the event. The group hopes to get an early start in planning next year's Prom and is discussing other possible events, such as a Pride Block Party in downtown Holyoke to occur sometime this summer.

To become involved with the Holyoke GLBTQ Task Force or to provide a donation, contact Alex Morse at (413) 210-8208 or by email at alex.b.morse@gmail.com.

The Father of online dating: One-on-one with Manhunt Founder

By: Sebastian Reynolds

With more than 2 million members worldwide, *Manhunt* is the leading gay website in the United States. What began as a local telephone dating service is now worldwide in more than 100 countries.

As co-founder and chairman of *Manhunt*, Jonathan Crutchley is the man behind the blue and orange curtain. We sat with him to discuss how he and business partner Larry Basile first came up with the idea for an online gay dating site; and how in ten short years, Manhunt has changed the way gay men meet other gay men. SR: How did you become the ultimate gay matchmaker?

JC: Oh my God, you really mean this? You've got me blushing down to my toenails.

Q: Have you always had a knack for matching men?

A: The truth is that I have always been a shy and introverted person, especially when I came out as a gay man, which didn't happen until I was 30. Back in the '70's when I was coming out, gay bars and discos were the places to go to meet gay men. If you were a good dancer with a gym body and perfect hair, you made friends, but I was the guy watching all the others from a dark corner of the room. Q: How did you meet men in the 70s?

A: It wasn't until the introduction of telephone chat lines, like the ones founded by my business partner Larry Basile in 1987, that I was able to meet more guys and make friends. On the telephone lines you were just a voice—the rest was unseen, and, until you met someone in person, they were just a fantasy. Fantasy is powerful, and it helped me emerge

from my shell. Later, when I partnered with Larry Basile in the telephone chat lines and, after that, the internet personals business, we perfected the use of fantasy to help men meet each other.

Q: Are people surprised to meet the man behind the *Manhunt* curtain?

A: Yes, the real me is not what people imagine. For 25 years I sold real estate and wore sport jackets from Brooks Brothers. You wouldn't find me marching in a Pride Parade with my shirt off, but I'd be watching the parade from the sidelines.

Q: What is the secret to *Manhunt*'s success? How did it become the #1 dating website for gay men?

A: Larry and I knew that *Manhunt*'s customers are more than just those who live in gay neighborhoods in big cities and who follow the latest trends and fashions. Our market is much larger than that including bears, leather guys, even married and bi-guys—whom we guess could be as many as 30% of *Manhunt* users. We always knew that gay men were everywhere, and with *Manhunt*, guys from Nashville, Tennessee to North Dakota can find each other. There is much more to gay life than Chelsea in New York City or the Castro or West Hollywood. We developed a site that was easy for the average guy to use and we emphasized our 24-hour a day Customer Service to help guys use the site and be comfortable with it and with themselves.

Q: How has gay dating changed since the site began ten years ago? What were men looking for then? What are men looking for now?

A: Guys have always been looking for the



JONATHAN CRUTCHLEY

Photo by: Peter Urban

same things. The internet makes it much easier to find exactly what you want.

Q: How does *Manhunt* feel about eHarmony and Match.com targeting the gay community?

A: Straight dating sites just don't get it as far as what gay men are looking for. Have you ever filled out one

of their questionnaires that ask "do you want children" or "what is your income?" These are questions that women want to know about men as possible marriage partners. Gay men want to know what other men look like and how big it is.

Q: Since the latest Craigslist murder in Boston, many have questioned the safety of meeting people on the internet. How safe is *Manhunt*?

A: I'm not supposed to say this, but meeting a stranger on *Manhunt* can be just as dangerous as meeting a stranger on Craigslist or in a bar or in a dark alley. We tell guys to be careful and meet first in a public place, but men will do what they want. The internet can be dangerous.

Q: Is it *Manhunt*'s responsibility to protect its members from online predators?

A: We urge *Manhunt* members to take respon-

sible precautions about meeting any stranger, but it is difficult if not impossible to prevent bad things from happening. If a criminal action does take place, such as a robbery or assault, local police can obtain information through a court-ordered subpoena or search warrant for information that may be in our data base that may help them prosecute.

Q: *Manhunt* will be introducing its new version later this year. How will the new *Manhunt* be different than classic *Manhunt*?

A: *Manhunt*'s new version is being rolled out as we speak in Australia and South America. Our current version is at capacity, so, when too many guys are on line at once, the site will crash. The new version accommodates many more users, but it will look different and take getting used to. Our Australian and Latin American users didn't like the new version at first because of the differences, but when they got used to it, and when we got all the bugs out of the system, everyone now seems fairly happy.

Q: Is mobile the next big wave for meeting men?

A: Depends on what country you're in. In Japan cell phones outnumber computers, so you have to have a cell phone application and most people will use it. Mobile applications are taking longer to get adopted in the U. S., but they are catching on with young people first. Yes, the future is mobile. *Manhunt* has a mobile application and we're updating it. Q: How will men meet other men in 2020?

A: I'll send you a text message from Heaven and let you know.

For more information visit Manhunt.net.

Connecticut Connection & More

CT Congressional delegation weighs in on marriage equality & DOMA Repeal

Hartford—Last week, *Love Makes a Family* released the positions of the Connecticut Congressional delegation on the issues of marriage equality for same-sex couples and repeal of the federal "Defense of Marriage Act" (DOMA).

Nearly 1,000 same-sex couples have gotten marriage licenses in Connecticut since they became available in November 2008. DOMA has blocked these couples from access to the rights, benefits, and responsibilities of every federal program that takes account of married status-protections (such as spousal Social Security benefits) that provide critical legal safety nets for couples and families.

A recent *Love Makes a Family* survey revealed that repeal of DOMA was the overwhelming priority of its members. With those results in mind, the organization sent letters to

the state's two U.S. Senators and five Congress people, asking where they stood on DOMA and urging support for its repeal.

Results: Urging for Marriage Equality

- Four of the seven (Dodd, Courtney, Himes and Murphy) support marriage equality.

- Rep. DeLauro would not comment specifically on support of marriage equality but responded that she was "comfortable with Connecticut's law."

- Senator Lieberman issued a statement which indicated he does not support marriage equality (full statement at www.lmfct.org).

Support for Repeal of DOMA

- Reps. Courtney, Himes and Murphy support full repeal of DOMA; Sen. Dodd and Rep. DeLauro support repeal of Section 3 to allow married same-sex couples to receive federal benefits, with Sen. Dodd adding support for

portability of federal benefits; Sen. Lieberman does not support the repeal of DOMA

- Only Congressman Larson refused to provide a response on marriage equality and DOMA after repeated requests.

A summary of the delegation's positions can be found on the *Love Makes a Family* website: www.lmfct.org.

"Now that marriage equality is a reality in Connecticut, we need the leadership of those who represent us in Washington to eliminate the barrier to equal treatment under federal law for same-sex couples and our families, something that can only happen with the repeal of the discriminatory federal DOMA," said Anne Stanback, *Love Makes a Family* Executive Director.

DOMA was enacted by Congress in 1996,

before any state began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples. It has two substantive parts. Section 2 allows states to disrespect the marriages of same-sex couples performed in other states. Marriage equality supporters find this section of DOMA insulting since states have always had the right to make determinations as to which marriages they will respect, as long as those decisions are in line with constitutional guarantees. Section 3 excludes legally married same-sex couples from any federal law or program in which marriage is a factor, denying those couples critical rights and benefits. (There are 1,138 federal laws where marital status is a factor.)

** Love Makes a Family is a coalition of individuals and organizations that has been the leading voice in the campaign for marriage equality in Connecticut since 2000.*

Administration moves forward on regulation ending HIV travel & immigration ban

"We are one important step closer to finally ending this discriminatory ban once and for all," said HRC President Joe Solmonese.

WASHINGTON—The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization, responded today to the Office of Management and Budget indicating that they have completed review of a proposed regulation which would remove the remaining barrier to HIV-positive visitors and immigrants. The proposal, which OMB indicates would remove HIV from the list of communicable diseases that bar foreign nationals from entering the United States, will now be published in the Federal Register and open for a period of public comment. After reviewing those comments, the Department of Health and

Human Services will issue a final regulation.

"We are one important step closer to finally ending this discriminatory ban once and for all," said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese. "This regulation is unnecessary, ineffective and lacks any public health justification. We are confident that this sad chapter in our nation's treatment of people with HIV and AIDS will soon be closed."

In July 2008, President Bush signed into law, as part of the reauthorization of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), a provision that removed the ban from statute and returned regulatory authority to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to determine whether HIV should remain on a list of communicable diseases that bar foreign nationals from entering the United States.

HRC has been a lead organization lobbying on Capitol Hill for the statutory repeal and working to ensure that Department of Health and Human Services' regulations were changed. The Human Rights Campaign worked closely with the offices of Senator John Kerry (D-MA) and former Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR), as well as Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA), the sponsors of the effort in Congress last year to repeal the ban. Since passage of the PEPFAR bill, HRC has lobbied both the Bush and Obama administrations to remove the remaining regulatory ban.

The current travel and immigration ban prohibits HIV-positive foreign nationals from entering the U.S. unless they obtain a special waiver, which is difficult to obtain and can only allow for short-term travel. Current policy also prevents the vast majority of foreign

nationals with HIV from obtaining legal permanent residency in the United States. The ban originated in 1987, and was explicitly codified by Congress in 1993, despite efforts in the public health community to remove the ban when Congress reformed U.S. immigration law in the early 1990s. While immigration law currently excludes foreigners with any "communicable disease of public health significance" from entering the U.S., only HIV was explicitly named in the statute.

The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.

Congressman Frank corrects media reports on his response to DOMA Brief

Congressman Barney Frank issued the following statement last month in response to a newspaper story regarding his position on the brief by the Department of Justice about *Smelt v. United States*.

"When I was called by a newspaper reporter for reaction to the administration's brief defending the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act, I made the mistake of relying on other people's oral descriptions to me of what had been in the brief, rather than reading it first. It is a lesson to me that I should

not give in to press insistence that I comment before I have had a chance fully to inform myself on the subject at hand."

"Now that I have read the brief, I believe that the administration made a conscientious and largely successful effort to avoid inappropriate rhetoric. There are some cases where I wish they had been more explicit in disavowing their view that certain arguments were correct, and to make it clear that they were talking not about their own views of these issues, but rather what was appropriate in a constitutional case with a rational basis standard - which is the one that now prevails in the federal courts, although I think it

should be upgraded."

"It was my position in that conversation with the reporter that the administration had no choice but to defend the constitutionality of the law. I think it is unwise for liberals like myself, who were consistently critical of President Bush's refusal to abide by the law in cases where he disagreed with it to now object when President Obama refuses to follow the Bush example. It is the President's job to try to change the law, but it is also his obligation to uphold and defend it when it has been enacted by appropriate processes. It would not be wise, in my judgment, for those of us who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, or who sympathize with the fight for our rights, to argue for a precedent that says that

executives who disagreed politically with the purpose of the law should have the option of refusing to defend it in a constitutional case."

"I strongly opposed DOMA when it was adopted and I will continue to fight for changes. I support very strongly the lawsuit brought by the people at Gay & Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) that make the cogent argument that DOMA's provision denying federal recognition of same-sex marriages blatantly violates the equal protection clause. And I will work with the Obama administration as they have promised to do to enact laws protecting LGBT people from hate crimes, from job discrimination, and from discrimination in the military. I will also be critical when I think inappropriate language is used. But after rereading this brief, I do not think that the Obama administration should be subject to harsh criticism in this instance."

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Political IQ: Stonewall's Unfinished Revolution



Diane Silver

Forty years ago, the patrons of the Stonewall Inn risked everything, and their courage ignited the modern LGBT rights movement.

This month, as we commemorate the Stonewall uprising at gay pride celebrations around the world, perhaps we should also ask ourselves what we're willing to risk for equality.

The events at the Stonewall Inn, a New York City bar, began in the early morning hours of June 28, 1969. At the time, to be "queer" was to be officially classified as both mentally ill and criminal.

Acts of intimacy between consenting adults in their own homes were illegal in 48 states. LGBT applicants were automatically disqualified from federal employment and service in the military. People who wore clothing deemed inappropriate for their gender could be arrested.

Bars were frequently our only havens at the same time that liquor laws often forbid serving alcohol to gays. Bars known to have LGBT clientele were raided repeatedly by police.

But when officers arrived at the Stonewall Inn for what was supposed to be a routine raid, the patrons did something LGBT people rarely did: They fought back—risking their lives and their freedom.

They blocked police from loading prisoners into a paddy wagon and stopped the raid. That resistance led to six nights of upheaval.

The people of Stonewall weren't the first to battle police harassment. That honor goes to the transgender patrons of San Francisco's Compton's Cafeteria, who fought back in 1966.

Stonewall didn't mark the start of LGBT activism. As early as the 1920s, a few people tried to organize for change. The homophile movement made progress in the 1950s and early 1960s. But Stonewall touched off something new.

"Suddenly new possibilities and expectations were in the air," historian Martin Duberman writes in his 1993 book, Stonewall. "People began to dream about something other than getting from one day to the next with a minimum of discomfort."

Within weeks, new political organizations had been founded. In little more than a decade, the structure of the modern LGBT movement had been built.

Since 1969, police raids have passed into history. The laws that once criminalized homosexuality have been overturned. The medical community no longer sees us as mentally ill. The rules that once barred us from federal jobs have been dropped.

Bans on discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity have become law in 20 states and the District of Columbia.

Same-sex marriage has been legalized in six states.

We have come so far, but we're still second-class citizens.

The Defense of Marriage Act, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and immigration inequalities are just some of the laws that punish our families, hurt our children and impoverish us.

We don't know yet whether voters will overturn marriage equality in any of the states that just enacted it. Extending marriage to all 50 states seems daunting.

The history of the movement is a story of evolving dreams. Before Stonewall, our most fervent dream was to merely get by, hidden but alive. The dream of the patrons of the Stonewall Inn was to live free of harassment.

I came out 10 years after Stonewall. My dream was to live openly and honestly without being fired, shunned by my family, or beaten to death by bigots who hated dykes on sight. At the time, I was considered radical. The idea that I could even hope to marry never once entered my mind.

Today a new generation—the second to come of age since Stonewall—thinks my old dreams are timid. They want nothing less than full equality.

They have no patience with us Baby Boomers and the institutions we built. These LGBT millennials, and their heterosexual brethren, think our old go-slow, step-by-step strategy is obsolete.

They're right.

But their passion will not win equality until LGBT Americans are once again willing to sacrifice. It is time that we follow the lead of Stonewall and put our own security on the line.

Lt. Dan Choi and other gay service members are already challenging DADT. The rest of us need to come out to family, friends, neighbors and co-workers.

Nadine Smith, executive director of Equality Florida, recently suggested, among other actions, that married couples risk the wrath of the IRS and refuse to pay federal taxes as if they were single - a requirement necessitated by DOMA.

"It seems increasingly clear to me," Smith writes, "that we must now do what civil rights movements have always done: with forethought and solemnity place ourselves visibly at odds with an unjust law to provoke the consequences that can prick the conscience of our country."

The patrons of the Stonewall Inn would expect nothing less.

* Diane Silver is a former newspaper reporter and magazine editor, whose work has appeared in *The Progressive*, *Salon.com*, *Ms.*, and other national publications. She can be reached care of this publication or at PoliticalIQ@qsyndicate.com.

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Jacques Cabaret
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Machine
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Boston Lesbian Voices

Lesbian Voices: The President's Gay Report Card



By: Rev. Irene Monroe*

The President has been an Obama-nation on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues since he's taken office.

The political carrots Obama dangled before us as campaign promises are now looking like merely empty rhetoric that was used to court our votes and to collect our campaign dollars.

But with a 74 percent disapproval rating the President now has with us according to the recent Washington Blade poll that asked the question "Is Obama moving fast enough on LGBT issues?," and with many LGBTQ Democrats, especially those with deep pockets, boycotting the June 26th DNC fundraiser in D.C. that would fill the party's coffers with queer dollars, the Justice Department decided to have a conversation with us.

And in their effort to thwart off both a huge political and financial lost to Obama and the party, the DOJ conducted a hush-hush damage control meeting with the nation's top LGBTQ heads of organizations on Monday June 29. In a written invitation from the White House it states the following:

"The President and Mrs. Obama request the pleasure of your company and a reception to be held at the White House on Monday, June 29, 2009 at 3:30 p.m. Please respond at the Social Secretary of the White House at your earliest convenience giving your date of birth and social security number of your guest and yourself."

The purpose of the gathering was to ask us what we want.

But the question appeared not only disingenuous but also deceptively political given the glaring evidence of the president's conflicted and contradictory actions his adminis-

tration has taken on key LGBTQ policies this month.

Let's start with June 1.

On June 1 Obama issued a Presidential Proclamation in honor of Pride Month, stating, "Here at home, I continue to support measures to bring the full spectrum of equal rights to LGBT Americans. These measures include enhancing hate crimes laws, supporting civil unions and Federal rights for LGBT couples, outlawing discrimination in the workplace, ensuring adoption rights, and ending the existing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in a way that strengthens our Armed Forces and our national security."

On June 4 Jonathan Capehart, an African American gay journalist at the Washington Post wrote the op-ed "Okay, Obama. Now Let's Have a Speech on Gay Rights," stating "After last night's airing of NBC's Inside the Obama White House interview, in which Obama provided a tepid answer to a question about whether "gay and lesbian couples who wish to marry in this country have a friend in the White House," the blogosphere is filling with cries of "shameful" and "no passion, no heart, no real connection to our cause."

On June 8 the Supreme Court agreed with the Obama administration in refusing to review the Pentagon policy that prohibits LGBTQ servicemembers to serve openly in the military.

To add salt to an already open wound for our LGBTQ service members, Obama's administration stated in the court papers that the ruling on DADT was correct because of the military's legitimate concern of LGBTQ service members endangering "unit cohesion" in spite of the 2002 study "A Modest Proposal: Privacy as a Flawed Rationale for the Exclusion of Gays and Lesbians from the U.S. Military," that proved otherwise.

On June 12, the LGBTQ community got

another blow: Obama defended (DOMA), a law that prevent couples in the states that recognize same-sex marriage from securing Social Security spousal benefits, filing joint taxes and other federal rights of marriage. His reasons: DOMA is not a valid exercise of Congress's power, and it is not consistent with Equal Protection or Due Process principles, and it would infringe on the rights of taxpayers in states that fundamentally oppose same-sex marriage.

During the evening of June 12 Campbell Brown of CNN, sensing the tension in the LGBTQ community, had a segment asking the question "Is President Obama Selling Out the Gay Community?"

Dan Savage, a nationally syndicated gay columnist gave his response:

"I'm sick of hearing about the president's commitment. I want to see action from the White House.... The president has sold us out in California today. He filed a brief and a challenge to the Defense of Marriage Act that is so insanely bigoted that the HRC, Human Rights Campaign, which is the most mainstream middle of the road gay group, called it false and damaging legal arguments. People are incensed."

On June 17 Obama extended some benefits to same-sex partners of federal employers, but left couples without federal and health benefits. No one is sure what these few benefits the President has doled out to our community will mean as long as DOMA isn't repealed.

Gay writer and radio host Michelangelo Signorile wrote on his blog, "[T] he Obama administration is throwing us a pathetic bone: benefits for federal workers. Wow. Give me a break!"

And, on June 19 invitations went out to major LGBTQ organizations for us to come talk with the President. The talk followed by a gala reception to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion.

Is the President playing us stupid? He receives a failing grade on queer civil rights.

And, he needs to know it will take more than lip-service and a party for us to believe we got a friend in the White House.

* Rev. Irene Monroe is the Coordinator of the African American Roundtable of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry (CLGS) at the Pacific School of Religion, and a religion columnist. A native of Brooklyn, Rev. Irene Monroe is a graduate from Wellesley College and Union Theological Seminary at Columbia University, and served as a pastor at an African-American church before coming to Harvard Divinity School for her doctorate as Ford Fellow. As a syndicated queer religion columnist, Monroe columns appear across the country on the Huffington Post, in the Boston Globe, the Boston Herald, the Bay State Banner, Cambridge Chronicle, and Metro News.

Her award-winning essay, "Louis Farrakhan's Ministry of Misogyny and Homophobia," was greeted with critical acclaim. Monroe has been profiled in O, Oprah Magazine, and CNN's Paula Zahn Now, and "CNN Headline News." She was also profiled in the Gay Pride Episode of "In the Life" TV where the segment on her was nominated for an educational Emmy. She has received the Harvard University Certificate of Distinction in Teaching several times while being the head teaching fellow of the Rev. Peter Gomes, the Pusey Minister in the Memorial Church at Harvard.

She is in the film, "For the bible Tells me so," an exploration of the intersection between religion and homosexuality in the U.S. and how the religious right has used its interpretation of the Bible to stigmatize the gay community, and her coming out story is profiled in "CRISIS: 40 Stories Revealing the Personal, Social, and Religious Pain and Trauma of Growing up Gay in America" that was just released in September 2008. Monroe sits on the advisory board of several national LGBTQ organizations. Monroe lives in Cambridge and can be reached at revimmonroe@earthlink.net (no hyphens).

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The Outfield: Spiderbaby, The Twin Cities' Favorite (Gay) Wrestler

By: Dan Woog*



The results are in. The "Best Wrestler of 2009"—at least in the Twin Cities—is a gay man.

But the bigger news might be that "SpiderBaby's" selection has caused no news frenzy at all.

More interesting may be the fact that SpiderBaby—the *nom de mat* of Terrance Griep—made the transition from villain to fan favorite in just six years. And he did it partly because of - not in spite of - his sexuality.

Griep's route to wrestling began when he was 5. Then, at that young age, he did not understand the sport's homoerotic subtext; he simply liked the characters, the simplicity of good-versus-evil and the action.

At 5, Griep also had his first crush—though he recognizes it only in hindsight: "It was the drummer kid from the Partridge Family!" he laughs. "I wanted him to be my pal."

Griep's first career was writing. His outlets ranged from gay magazines like *The Advocate* to comic books. But when his income dried up in the economic downturn of 2001, he looked around Minnesota—where he had grown up - for new sources.

A wrestling show needed a color commentator. Griep thought that might lead to an interesting writing market. But as he bartered his writing for training—he also wanted to learn how to fall without getting hurt—Griep realized he had "a talent for teeing off drunk-fans." He'd found his niche.

Griep was already out to many in his life. But when someone Googled the new grappler, the word got, well, out in the wrestling world. No one said anything to his face, though a colleague alluded to his *Advocate*.com piece, "How Spider-Man Saved My Life." (That story - about the important influence of a superhero who also dealt with the normal struggles of adolescence—foreshadowed Griep's creation of his own "SpiderBaby" character.)

Griep soon realized that - although he was a villain—he could use sexuality to his advantage. "I actually sent a positive message," he

recalls. "You could boo me because I cheated on the mat, or was reprehensible. But you couldn't boo me just because I was gay." In other words: Boo me for what I do, not who I am.

Griep conveyed that nuanced message when a group of teenage boys chanted: "You are gay" (clap-clap-clap). SpiderBaby went over to them and responded: "You say that like it's bad!" (clap-clap-clap). The crowd turned on the youths; they soon shut up.

In Wisconsin, Griep was surprised to hear his opponent call him a "fag." "That gave the crowd permission to be hostile," Griep says. "When I won, I waved my belt in front of their noses. They just stared straight ahead."

As SpiderBaby became known as a gay wrestler, more and more audiences admired his "outness." Today he is a hero.

Pro wrestling straddles the line between sports and entertainment. It also is burdened with decades of stereotypes.

"The cigar-smoking, beer-drinking white guy getting his thrills watching the bad man get beat up—that hasn't been true for 25 years," Griep claims. "Our audiences are the full age range, all income levels, every demographic. People understand it's a catharsis. If the stereotypes were true, it wouldn't be as popular as it is."

However, he adds, pro wrestling is not as advanced as other areas of society. Most gay fans remain closeted, and the number of out wrestlers and promoters is tiny.

Griep recalls fearing the reactions of fans and fellow wrestlers when they realized he was "exchanging body fluids in the ring" with a gay man. "Maybe people don't feel welcome because there are not more of us," he says. "Wrestling definitely does not have a gay tradition."

Even his own gay friends don't fully understand the sport and how homosexuality fits into it. "They either find wrestling repugnant, or they think it's some kind of stylized S&M," Griep says.

But enough people do love the sport to make it popular - and to lead *City Pages*, the Twin Cities' alternative newspaper, to make "Best Wrestler" one of its 2009 categories.

Crowds react to SpiderBaby because of how he wrestles, "not because he likes to kiss



SPIDERBABY

guys," *City Pages* wrote.

Griep appreciates the honor. But true to SpiderBaby's character, he deflects it a bit. "I've been billing myself as the Most Formidable Wrestler in Sector 2814, which is Green Lantern's jurisdiction," he says. "So to be told I'm the best wrestler in two cities on one planet feels like something of a demotion, I guess."

Still, he notes, "a generation ago, working a gay gimmick was the surest way to get a wrestling crowd to boo. Now they've rounded the bend. God bless 'em."

You can take that to the mat.

* Dan Woog is a journalist, educator, soccer coach, gay activist, and author of the "Jocks" series of books on gay male athletes. Visit his Web site at www.danwoog.com. He can be reached care of this publication or at OutField@qsyndicate.com.

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